

Issues in Bioethics
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Module No. #02
Lecture No. #01
Ethical Theories and Bioethical Issues

(Refer Slide Time: 00:00) Hi, Welcome to the Unit One of the Module Two of the course, Issues in Bioethics. This particular lecture will deal with, the Ethical theories and Bioethical issues. So, in a sense, this is going to introduce, the Ethical theories. And also, briefly discuss the relevance of Ethical theories in Bioethics reflections. So, we will have to see, how these Ethical theories are going to be important or relevant, when it comes to Bioethical issues.

Because there is a problem. On the one hand, we know that theories have developed in philosophical traditions. In various philosophical traditions, which primarily deal with very abstract issues, conceptions of good, right. And these issues may not necessarily deal with practical considerations. And we have seen that in traditional Ethical theories, this was a problem. There was always a gap existed between theory and practice.

And one of the major criticism against, some of the theoretical frameworks is that, they are quite insensitive about, what actually happens in the world, when people do act, and how certain concrete Ethical dilemmas can be resolved by using this theoretical frameworks. There, whether they are practically viable. All such issues figuring. And on the other hand, we all know that, the domain of Bioethics is a very dynamic, very active domain.


And Physicians and patients and various other health care workers, they encounter issues, which they have to resolve by taking into account, several facts, several conditions about the concrete context in which such issues emerge. It is very difficult to arrive at solutions, which are really made. We have to take in to account several factors, in which a particular issue appears. And then, evaluate various factors and take decisions. So, in this context, how a highly theoretical, highly abstract theory is going to help for practical deliberations is a problem.

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Bioethics and Ethical Theory

Ethical theory: deals with the principles of moral reasoning	Bioethics: moral issues encountered in concrete contexts.
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- Bioethics demands more practical approach.
- Why do we need theory?
- How can a general theory help in reasoning concerning specific issues?



This is where you know, we can see that Ethical theory deals with the principles of moral reasoning. How, we can deal with or rather, we can go ahead with moral reasoning. Moral reasoning deals with, what is right, to know, to justify, how a particular action can be justified as a right action or why should we avoid certain courses of action on certain context. So, all these things, is what Ethical theories will normally deal with.

And then, but, when it comes to Bioethics, as I mentioned, moral issues encountered in concrete context appears to be important. And it demands more practical approach. And Physicians often wonder, why do we need a theory. And it is also historically true that, philosophical theories of Ethics are rather Ethicist in the usual sense of the term, when never been consulted by Physicians, when they encountered Ethical issues earlier.

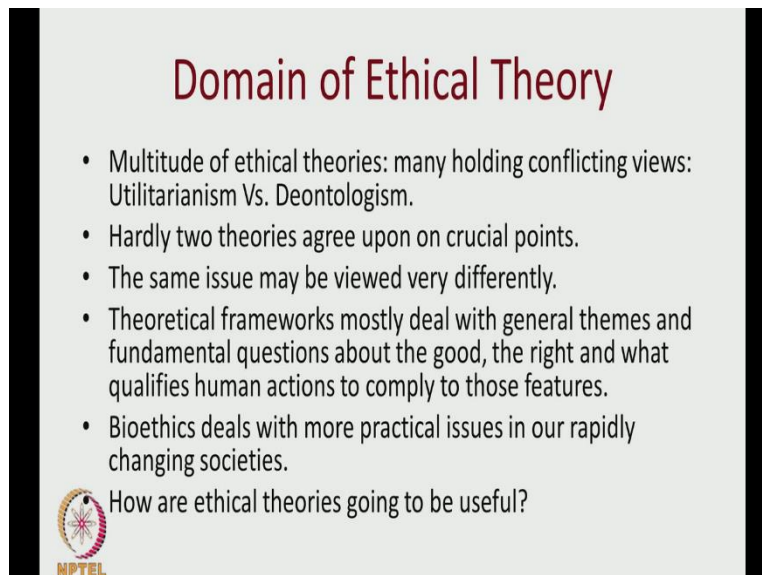
Even today, it is to some extent, it is a practice that, they just think that, it is their domain. Whatever issues, they encounter, they will resolve it. And they think that, they have the practical wisdom to do that, which is actually not correct. Because, we all know that, Ethical issues encountered in the practice of medicine are not medical issues per sake, they are also social issues and in that sense, they need a wider deliberation.

Physicians, who are experts in certain scientific domain are not experts to deal with such issues. So, we need to take inputs from various people. And of course, from the Ethicist as well. (Refer Slide Time: 03:54). So, in that context, we need a really broad approach, when it comes to a deliberating upon Ethical theories, that emerge in the practice of medicine.

But at the same time, the question, we have to answer is, how can a general theory help in reasoning concerning specific issues. Though Ethical theory deals with reasoning, moral reasoning. Here, there is a specific, say for example, Abortion. And certain groups of people believe that, Abortion is wrong.

And certain other groups believe that there is nothing wrong in Abortion. Women have the right to do that. And several other complicated issues that might arise. So, how can these general theoretical frameworks be of help for a Physician or a Practitioner or an Ethicist in this context is a question. Again, when you approach, okay, let us accept that Ethical theory is going to give us a lot of insight about, how to go about. That is fine.


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Domain of Ethical Theory

- Multitude of ethical theories: many holding conflicting views: Utilitarianism Vs. Deontologism.
- Hardly two theories agree upon on crucial points.
- The same issue may be viewed very differently.
- Theoretical frameworks mostly deal with general themes and fundamental questions about the good, the right and what qualifies human actions to comply to those features.
- Bioethics deals with more practical issues in our rapidly changing societies.

How are ethical theories going to be useful?



But then, when you try to approach Ethical theories, we find that, there is a multitude of theories. It is not that, there is only one theory. There are several theoretical frameworks. Though for our convenience sake, in this course, we will be dealing only with a few Ethical frameworks like Deontologyism, Utilitarianism and all.

But, there are a number of many other ethical, theoretical frameworks, that exist in different cultures, different intellectual and philosophical traditions. So, which theory is going to be actually helpful. This is a question, which we have to deal with. So, there are multiple theories and Many holding conflicting views. Say for instance, Utilitarianism versus Deontologyism.

Utilitarians would always argue that, the consequences of an action is going to be deciding, whether a particular action is right or wrong. But on the other hand, Deontologyism very clearly asserts that, consequences have nothing to do, when it comes to the moral worth or moral value of a particular action. So, when a Physician takes a decision in a particular clinical context.

Whether he can adopt the Utilitarian framework which emphasizes the consequences or the Deontological frameworks, which underlines the duty aspect of Physicians. So, this is something which, we have to deal with. . And, we also find that theories often, may not agree with each other. They disagree on very crucial points. And this again will cause a lot of issues.

And the same issue may be viewed very differently by different theories, theoretical frameworks. The issue, which I have cited, Abortion. That can have a different interpretations in different context. It calls for actually different interpretations in different context because if you are a Utilitarian, you look what will be the consequences. And the Utility of the action is more important than anything else. But if you are a Christian, if you're a Catholic, if you believe in divine command theory, you will assert that, it is wrong to Abort.

So, there are Many such issues, we can cite, where conflicting opinions figuring. And, the reason why we do not find a very clear cut guideline from the theoretical frameworks is that, theoretical frameworks mostly deal with general themes and fundamental questions about the good, the

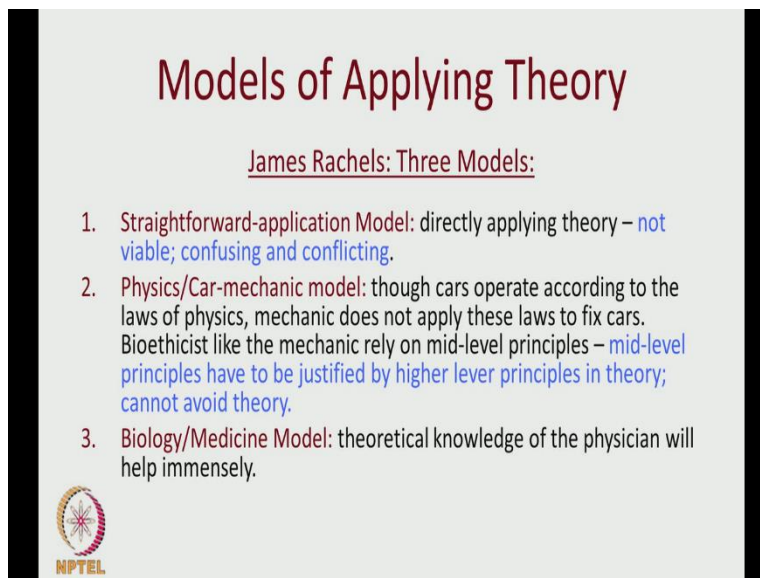
right, and what qualifies human actions to comply to those features. They do not deal with very specific concrete issues.

They are theories. That is why, they are theories. So, why should a particular action be wrong or right may not be a direct consent of a Theorist, at this Ethical Theorist. Rather, an Ethical Theorist would deal with all those conditions, which make a particular action right or wrong. So, he or she is rather interested in seeing the conditions, that make a particular action right or wrong.

And Bioethics deals with more practical issues in our rapidly changing societies. And how are Ethical theories going to be useful. The issues, which Bioethics deal with are quite practical, quite concrete. And here, we have the theoretical frameworks. Now in this context, let us turn to one suggestion, put forward by James Rachels.

He suggests, there are three models. Rachels suggest that, there are three models, which would be relevant. When you consider, the way in which, how these two domains are related, the domain of Theory and the domain of Bioethics.


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Models of Applying Theory

James Rachels: Three Models:

1. **Straightforward-application Model:** directly applying theory – *not viable; confusing and conflicting.*
2. **Physics/Car-mechanic model:** though cars operate according to the laws of physics, mechanic does not apply these laws to fix cars. Bioethicist like the mechanic rely on mid-level principles – *mid-level principles have to be justified by higher level principles in theory; cannot avoid theory.*
3. **Biology/Medicine Model:** theoretical knowledge of the physician will help immensely.



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The first one, he calls the straight forward application model, where theoretical frameworks are directly applied. You apply theory directly to situations, to context, where you encounter problems. But this may not work in all context. Because, as I mentioned, the actual context in which, we encounter problems or dilemmas will be extremely complex and complicated involving a lot of issues.

So, a direct approach towards theory may not help you at all. See you will ultimately get confused. In a particular context, if you try to apply different theoretical frameworks like relativism, divine command theory, Subjectivism, are even utilitarianism, deontologyism, Virtue ethics, you will end up in a total confusion. You cannot say, that any particular theoretical framework is going to precisely useful, for you to solve a particular problem.

Because, there will be always another theoretical frameworks, which would oppose that solution which you have cited, which you come across. So, this model is of course, it is not completely irrelevant. The theoretical frameworks can be occasionally directly apply to cases. No doubt about it.

For example: Irrespective of the context, there are certain things, which are expected from the Physician. The Physician has to protect, the interest of the patient. But then, when it comes to the question, what do you mean by interest of the patient. There again, interpretation is coming. Two Physicians, may have two different views about it.

One Physician may feel that, I know the interest of the patient because, I know his medical conditions better than he himself or anyone else. So, I will take the decision. Whatever decision I take, is going to be the right and better decision for him. Another Physician might feel that, though I am quite capable of understanding his medical situation, decision is going to be his. Because, he is the one, who should have total control over his body.

And he knows better than me, what his welfare is, what his happiness is. So, am only a facilitator not a decision maker. So, two Physicians might have very different views about, what is

ultimately the patient's welfare though, both of them are concerned about patient welfare and patient well-being

So, now you have another model, which is the Physics Car Mechanic model. So, what he says is that, cars function on the basis of the laws of Physics. No doubt about it. Everyone knows it. But, the mechanic as such, may not know these laws. The mechanic may not be an expert in these laws. He or She might be knowing only certain very crude principles about it, how things work. See, there is a problem here.

This problem could be, because of the fuel tank issues, or that issue he may not be knowing, the Physics behind it. The exact theoretical reasons behind it. And, he the mechanic would be able to set the problem, quite easily because of his experience, without really knowing the theoretical aspect of it. So, this theory works in certain domains. Even in medicine also, it works. It has certain limited work ability within the domain of the practice of medicine.

But this is not going to work in all cases. This has got tremendous limitations. Some point of time, Physicians might need to know about the theoretical complexities as well. So, this model though it is going to help a little bit, but it is not going to help completely. See, what happens is, Rachels says that, according to this model, the Physics car mechanic model, the Bioethicist will deal with certain mid-level principles, which are not really high-level principles.

High-level principles are the domain of theory. So, he or she would be dealing with certain mid-level principles, which are not highly theoretical, but at the same time, which can be traced back to these high-level theoretical notes and then deal with these mid-level principles and on. Some occasions, this work perfectly well. But on Many occasions, this may not work at all. Mid-level principles have to be justified by higher level principles and theory.

And on several occasions, we cannot avoid theory. Takes us back to theory quite frequently. Again, he proposes another model, which according to him is rather more suitable, when it comes to Bioethics. The Biology medicine model, where you have a Physician. And the

Physician is also a person, who has reasonably good theoretical knowledge about biology and other things.

He has reasonably good knowledge about the body, the human body, a theoretical knowledge as well. He is not a person with practical knowledge alone. He also has theoretical knowledge, which helps in immensely in his practice. So, this model would be rather more appropriate, when it comes to Bioethics, according to Rachels.

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Approaching Theory: Historical Approach

- The Beginning: Greek Ethics in the Homeric Days and in the Age of the City States
- Eudaimonic Ethics: teleological and emphasis on virtue and character
- Christian Ethics: Divine command
- Enlightenment Ethics: Deontologism and Hedonism Theories (mainly Utilitarianism)

Other Approaches

- Evolutionary ethics
- Relativism
- Subjectivism
- Natural Law
- Social Contract
- Ethics of Care

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Now, let us come back to the real issue. Let us come back to the question of approaching theory. So, we are now trying to understand theory. And I am trying to adopt a bit of historical approach here. There is a reason for that. Because, I would also like the students to appreciate that, you know every Ethical theory is rooted in a particular history. .

So, when it comes to the beginning, when we try to understand historically, how Ethical theories have emerged, how Ethics as a discipline has emerged, and how philosophers have actually started theorizing Ethical deliberations. Then we have to essentially go back to the Greek tradition in the western world. The Greek Ethics in the Homeric days, of course is the beginnings.

And the age of the city states, which follows later. Where we will find the Sophist, who are the moving teachers, who taught rhetorics along with Ethical deliberations. The Sophist have also questioned some of the beliefs and customs, that existed in Greek those days. And they post a very serious problem to people like Socrates and others.

Socrates actually encounters the Sophist. Most of his philosophical deliberations, began as an encounter with the Sophist. And Socrates eventually argued for certain firm foundation opposing the skepticism advocated by the Sophist. So, the beginning and then, I use this word Eudaimonic Ethics, to indicate a very broad framework of Ethical theories, which I will not be discussing here.

This Eudaimonic Ethics is quite teleological, which suggests that, there is a purpose behind doing action. So, a person to be good, virtuous, there is a reason behind that. That person has a direct gain from being virtuous. So, you have to be Ethical because you gain something by being Ethical. And what is your gain, the concept of Eudaimonia, which is clearly elaborated by Aristotle.

Aristotle talks about the concept of Eudaimonia, which is, which can be roughly translated as, it is not happiness. But something like happiness or satisfaction, which you derive from the totality of your life. So, this is the ultimate objective of a moral life. And this Eudaimonia is, something which is desirable. Since, it is desirable, one should do things, which would promote, which would generate Eudaimonia.

And an Ethical living is something, which results in Eudaimonia. Again, the age followed by the Christian Ethics, for almost 1000 years. The Catholic Church dominated the European continent. And the Christian Church, the Catholic Church had its own theories about Ethics. Mostly, it extrapolated the Ethical theories developed by Aristotle. So, in this context, we will use the word, Virtue Ethics.

Virtue Ethics is a term, which I am going to use in this lecture to indicate the concept of Ethics promoted by Aristotle and Many others. And also, some of the modern Ethicist to argue for a

kind of virtuous life, which would consist in the totality of life of a person. So, we will come to that in detail slightly later. And then again, the Enlightenment ages another very significant era, where Ethics takes a very different turn. As Many other concept, the concepts in Ethics also have undergone tremendous changes during this era. In this particular era, we have two very important schools of Ethics.

The Deontologyism, which was primarily advocated by Immanuel Kant. And the Hedonistic schools and particularly Utilitarianism, which was advocated by people like Jeremy Bentham and J S Mill. So, these two schools are very important Ethical schools, Theoretical schools, which we will be discussing in the following lectures. And now, when you talk about other approaches, which is not, where I have not really following a historical chronology.

I will be mentioning certain other important approaches like the idea of evolutionary Ethics. Which became prominent with Charles Darwin's work on evolution, the idea of evolution. Then Relativism, which is a very interesting and important theoretical approach in Ethics. Because, no one can deny the fact that, certain values, certain conceptions of value good and right are relative from people to people and culture to culture

Then Subjectivism. Subjectivism is a variant of relativism. Only thing is that, it says that each individual subject is the standard. Then, you have the natural law theories, which argue that nature, anything you find in nature is good, anything that is natural is also good. So, Man has to go back to his nature in order to be good. And then, the very important model, which is called the social contract theories. Contemporary political theory rely a lot on this conception of social contract, which was developed by Empiricist Philosophers like John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. And then, the Ethics of care, which is developed by the feminists, which will be discussing much later.

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Why Historical?

- To understand the rootedness of theories in human histories and in specific social orders.
- MacIntyre: Moral theories are embodied in and are partially constitutive of forms of social life
- Concepts play different roles in different forms of social life.
- To understand the ethical values relevant for a profession: to see the historical evolution of the profession through different historical-social contexts.



And, as I mentioned the reason, why I am adopting historical approach here to discuss the evolution of Ethical theories is to understand the rootedness of this theories in human histories and in specific social orders. We can see that, certain Ethical theory became important during a certain period in history because of certain reasons. Particularly Deontologyism and Utilitarianism have become important during the Enlightenment. Because, Enlightenment is the era of Individualism as well.

So, Individuals gain a lot of importance during that age. And Deontologyism is one theory, which asserts the value of the individual. It says that, every individual needs to be treated as an end in itself and not as a means to an end. In this way, such theories underline the importance of the individual. Again, we will be starting with Virtue Ethics. Virtue Ethics emerged in the Greek civilization.

And there are historical reasons for that. So, MacIntyre, the famous Ethicist, philosopher, he says that moral theories are embodied in and are partially constitutive of forms of social life. So, social life is extremely important. The social life, the context of social life, where these theories are emerged needs to be understood, when we try to understand the history of Ethics. And he again says that, the concepts play. The moral concepts play different roles in different forms of social life.

See, for example: The concept of Justice play. The same concept appears in different cultural context, different civilizations for instance. You have it. Plato discusses this concept elaborately. And then, in Thomas Hobbes, you will find again the concept of Justice appears prominently. But these two philosophers have dealt with this concept in a very different ways.

So, concepts also have different roles in different theoretical frameworks and also social context. And here to understand the Ethical values relevant for a profession, which we are precisely trying to do in these lecture series. We have to see the historical evolution of a profession through different historical social context. So, again this is something, which we have to keep in mind.

We are talking about medicine as a profession. But medicine, as a profession though it has been a very old profession, has never been practiced in the same way throughout history. For instance, the Physician of the Greek days is very different individual compared to the Physician of 21st century today. And the kind of expectations and social roles, which we ascribe to a Physician is also very different. Those days' people definitely expected certain things from the Physician and the Physician was expected to deliver certain functions without fail those days.

And that's the reason why a certain kind of Ethical philosophy or Ethical framework was there to support the image, the idea of a Physician during those days. But in today's world, we have a different concept of a profession, a different idea of a Physician. We do not expect certain things, which we earlier expected from Physicians in today's world. Instead, we have another set of expectations. So, naturally the role and the function of the Physician also has undergone certain changes. Though across the period, there is some continuity, of course, we can see. (Refer Slide Time: 23:31)

Ancient Medicine: Role-Duty of Physicians

- [Medicine in ancient era](#): ancient Indian, Greek, Chinese – constitutes part of a very different social order.
- [Vaidya dharma](#): a set of personal virtues to be cultivated.
- [Homeric Greece](#): virtues are associated with the discharging one's allotted social function.
- Underlying assumption: the mythological assertion of a [cosmic order](#) (encompassing moral and natural)
- This order changed with the changes in social order due to historical factors – invasions, colonization, trade and travel, exposure to other different cultural practices etc.: emergence of skepticism – the [Sophists](#).



This is what I said, medicine in the ancient era, when it, when you try to locate and understand, how this was practiced in some of the ancient societies like Ancient India or Greece or the Chinese Society. And there, we all know that, the social context was very different. The social order was a very different kind, that existed during those days.

Particularly in India, if you examine, there is the concept of Vaidya Dharma. We believe that, the Vaidya or the Physician, he or she has to follow a set of norms, a set of principles based on the function, he or she delivers on the society. And he or she is expected to set, cultivate certain Virtues related to that roles, which he or she delivers. That is why, there is a role duty of Physician.

There is a particular role, they played in the society and depending on the nature of that role, there is a corresponding set of duties, which Physicians were expected to cultivate. And then, similarly in the Homeric Greece will find that, Virtues are associated with the discharging of one's allotted social function. And the underlying assumption is that, the mythological assertion of a Cosmic Order, encompassing moral and natural orders was something, which is so supreme during the Homeric days.

This is an observation by Mackinder, which I think is quite applicable to ancient India as well. Because in ancient India, the Vedas also talk about something like concept of Virutha, which

stands for The Cosmic and the Moral Orders. The Cosmic Order, which encompasses the moral, as well as a natural compartment of human reality.

So, they cannot be distinguished one from the another. So, this was that, this totality of reality, the totality of life was one of the important features of those ancient days. And then again, this order changed, with the changes in social order. We can see that, it is happening in the Greek world, with the Persian invasions, then colonization trade and travel, exposure to other different cultures and practices etcetera.

So, naturally this has exposed the Greek people, to different practices, different customs and different conventions. Once you are exposed to different cultural context or once you are exposed to different cultural practices and customs, naturally you might think, you might be skeptical about the validity of your own practices. Because, you see that others believe in another set of practices. How can you say that, your set of practices are more important or valid or right compare to their practices.

So, this has led to the kind of skepticism in the society. And the Sophist represent this temperament, that existed during those days. They raised several questions, by questioning the validity of conventions, by questioning the very validity of morality as such. According to them, all morality is nothing, but customary practices. Beyond that, there is no fundamentality about the validity of morals.

And this created conceptually, intellectually and theoretically a chaotic situation. Where you have to arrive at some set of values, which you can assert are not nearly customary and arbitrary. Some validity you have to give them.

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Virtue Ethics

- Descends from the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition.
- What kind of person ought I to be?
- How shall I be?
- What sort of life should I lead?
- Who is a virtuous physician?
- The focus is not on individual actions but on the totality of character of a person.
- The character traits that make a person virtuous.



So, in this context, we will find the emergence of Virtue Ethics. And this is one important Ethical framework, which we are going to discuss along with Utilitarianism and Deontology in this lecture series. Because of two reasons. One is its historical importance, it is one of those quite ancient Ethical frameworks, that have emerged in the European intellectual traditions.

And, we can also find a very similar kind of Ethical frameworks emerging in other civilizations as well. And the second reason is that, somehow it is even today relevant. Because, Virtue Ethics talks about certain Virtues, which people need to cultivate. Certain moral Virtues naturally. And these moral Virtues are even today very important. So, in that sense, Virtue Ethics is one very important Ethical theoretical framework. The central question, which Virtue Ethics raises is, what kind of a person ought I to be.

So, it is in this sense, the framework of Virtue Ethics is Characteristically different from other frameworks. And then again, how shall I be. What is the kind of personality, I should have. What Character, see the concept of Character is very important as far as Virtue Ethics is concerned. So, it is in this sense, I said that, somewhere you can find similarities between other traditions as well.

Because, one concept, which the Indian tradition has been emphasizing was the notion of Subhava. Subhava is more or less can be translated as Character. What sort of life, should I lead.

Again, who is a virtuous Physician. These are some practical questions, we can raise. So, it tries to give an answer to this question. What sort of a life, should I lead, by pointing out to certain moral ideals. It suggests that, you can lead the life of this person.

See for instance, its points to people like Great Human Ideals, Heroes like Mahatma Gandhi or Nelson Mandela or Jesus Christ or some others and argue that, these people possess certain admirable features, admirable Characteristic, Traits, which is desirable to be cultivated in all of us. So, they are our moral heroes.

And their Character, Traits are to be admired and cultivated. So, and again, when you try to see the relevance of Virtue Ethics framework in Bioethics, it suggests a way in which, you can be a virtuous Physician. The focus is not on individual actions but on the totality of Character of a person.

See, this is again a very interesting contribution of Virtue Ethics. Unlike Many other theories, which hardly deal with the Character of the person, which refers to the totality of that person's being. Say for example, Utilitarianism. Deliberates upon, what makes an action right or good. And it says that, it is a consequence.

If the consequences are good, the action is good. The reference to the individual hardly exist there. It is about the actions here. But for the Virtue Ethicist, the person who acts, a virtuous person from a virtuous person, you always expect only virtuous actions. He always performs the right things Again the Character Traits that make a person virtuous underlined.

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Dr Sheik Umar Khan



- The Sierra Leone doctor who was treating Ebola patients at a hospital in Kenema who died aged 39 from the disease which he contracted from them.
- Sierra Leone's Health Minister called him a [national hero](#).
- Three of the nurses also died of the same disease.
- What character traits make these people heroes?

So, this is the photograph of Dr. Sheikh Umar Khan, who was in news recently. He was a Doctor the Sierra Leone Doctor, who was treating Ebola patients at a hospital in Kenema, who died aged 39, from the disease, which he contracted from his patients. So, once the Ebola outbreak was there, Dr. Sheikh Umar Khan and others, they went to the site and try to root out the disease. And the health minister of his country called him a National Hero, because he laid down his life for helping others.

So, we should also recognize that, three of the nurses also died of the same disease. Not just one Doctor, there are Many Other Doctors also have laid down their lives. And again, what Character Traits make these people heroes? So, this is a question, which we need to ask. What Character Traits of Dr. Sheikh Umar Khan makes him a national hero?

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Virtue and Character

- We look for virtuous character traits – those can be admired.
 - Not just intellectual – difference between an **efficient doctor** and a **good doctor**.
 - How to recognize a virtuous trait?
 - Virtues fall at a mean between more extreme character traits
- Courage: between rashness and cowardice



Now let us come to the relationship between Virtue and Character. we look for virtuous Character Traits, those can be admired, as I already mentioned. And they are not just intellectual. Aristotle underlines this fact, there is an important difference between intellectual Virtues and moral Virtues. See in our day-to-day life also, in our contemporary life also, we make a distinction between good Doctors and efficient Doctors.

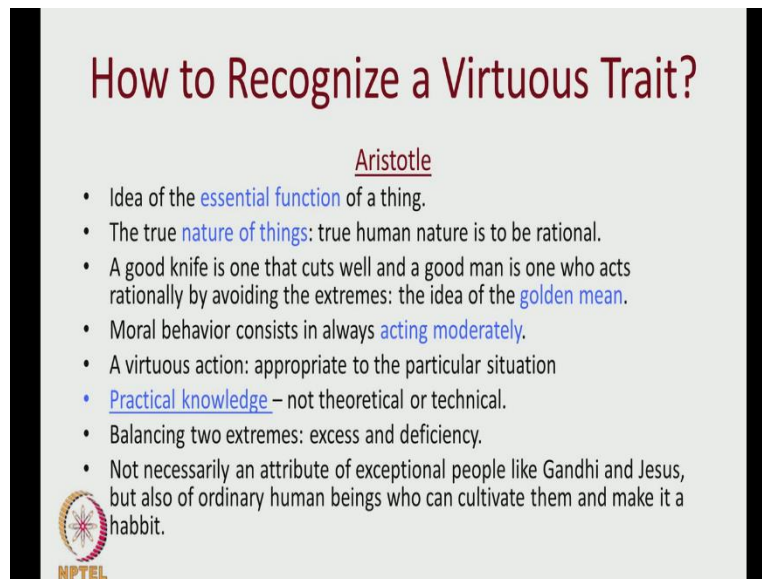
See, an efficient Doctor need not be a good Doctor always. An efficient Doctor can be really rude and also very greedy. But a good Doctor may not be that efficient like him. But still will be very kind, very dedicated, very concerned about his patients. So, there is always a value given to the moral Character of people even today. Now, the question is, how to recognize a virtuous Trait? This is a practical issue.

What do you mean by Virtue or a Virtuous Character Trait? Because, there again, you can say that, there are different frameworks possible. There are different of differences of opinions possible. Different people may have different conceptions of what is good, and what is virtuous. So, how can we recognize virtuous Trait. And Virtues fall at a mean between more extreme Character Traits. This is what, Aristotle says.

Aristotle ask us to look for the mean, the golden mean, between the extremes. He gives an example of courage and many other examples, he cites. Courage is a Virtue and it appears

between rashness and cowardice. See for instance, to jump from a huge building, a multi-storey building is not courage. It is foolishness or rashness. But at the same time, the other extreme is to be a coward about everything and anything. So, you have to maintain a balance somewhere in between and be reasonably courageous. If you are reasonably courageous by striking the golden mean, then it is a courage. Then, it is a moral Virtue.


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How to Recognize a Virtuous Trait?

Aristotle

- Idea of the [essential function](#) of a thing.
- The true [nature of things](#): true human nature is to be rational.
- A good knife is one that cuts well and a good man is one who acts rationally by avoiding the extremes: the idea of the [golden mean](#).
- Moral behavior consists in always [acting moderately](#).
- A virtuous action: appropriate to the particular situation
- [Practical knowledge](#) – not theoretical or technical.
- Balancing two extremes: excess and deficiency.
- Not necessarily an attribute of exceptional people like Gandhi and Jesus, but also of ordinary human beings who can cultivate them and make it a habit.



So, now to the question, how to recognize a Virtuous Trait. There is a little more elaborate answer, Aristotle gives us. His concept of Virtue is rooted in the idea of essential function of a thing. Anything will have an essential function. See for example, the knife or a table or a pen. A Good Pen is something, which writes well. A Good Knife is something, which cuts well. So, everything in this world, every object in this world and living creature in this world will have an essential nature.

And associated with that, essential nature, there is an essential function. So, there is a reference to the true nature of things, which every object will have, naturally human beings also will have. And what is the true nature of human beings? Being rational, to be rational. So, Aristotle's famous definition of Man. Man is a rational animal. So, Rationality is treated as one of the Characteristic features of Man.

And, this is what I said, we have to strike golden mean between the extremes. And the moral behavior, according to Aristotle is also to strike the golden mean, to act moderately, never to go to the extremes. And a virtuous action is appropriate to the particular situation. So, there is also a knowledge, which you require about the context, about the situation in which, you are acting. So, this is why, the moral knowledge according to Aristotle is a kind of practical wisdom.

So, Aristotle makes a distinction between theoretical knowledge, technical know-how and practical wisdom. And he says that, theoretical knowledge, the kind of theoretical knowledge, which we normally talk about. When we talk about mathematics and all, that this theory, that is pure theory, which is hardly going to be of any use, when it comes to morality.

Then, Technical Know-how. When you are engaged in engineering, there is this technical know-how, you have. Which is also not of much use, when it comes to Morality. But what Characterizes, Moral knowledge or Morality is a practical wisdom of the actor, who knows what is appropriate to the particular situations. And this is practical knowledge. And it is the balancing of the two extremes of excess and efficiency. And it is not necessarily an attribute of exceptional people like Gandhi and Jesus. See, this is very important.

for Aristotle or in the Greek sense of the term, a Virtue is not something, which can be found only in exceptional people like Gandhi or Jesus or Mohammed or some great human being like this, who are really really extraordinary and exceptional. They could be found in ordinary men as well. Only thing is that, you have to cultivate them. So, Aristotle was emphasizing on the fact that, you need to cultivate them. We might not have been born as naturally as a virtuous person. We need to cultivate this Traits, this Characteristic Traits.

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General Modern day Virtue Ethics Framework

- The concept of [human nature](#).
- To see ethics as an expression of [true](#) humanity.
- Avoid vices and cultivate those virtues that express this humanity.
- In bioethics: describes the models of virtuous practitioners which others can emulate: Dr. Umer Khan and the Nurses.
- What virtues different stakeholders can cultivate to make the profession more fruitful to humanity?



See, in what sense, we can find Virtue Ethics or Virtue Ethical framework relevant in today's world. We can start with the concept of human nature here again. Of course, we do not have to subscribe to an essentialist conception of human nature, which Aristotle did. We can have a rather more practical moderate consumption, which Alastair Campbell writes in his book Bioethics. To see Ethics, as an expression of true humanity.

Campbell says that, we can see Ethics as an expression of true humanity. And that is, what he associates the conception of human nature with. You do not have to really go back to some metaphysical concept of human nature and try to understand what is, try to see what is this human essence and all that.

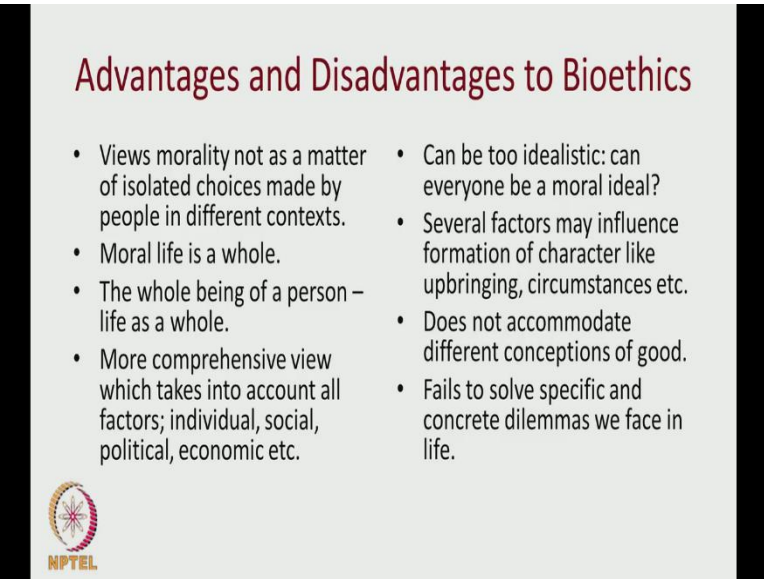
We just have to avoid vices and cultivate those Virtues, that express this true humanity in all of us. And in Bioethics, describes the models of virtuous Practitioners, which others can emulate like people like Umar Khan and the nurses and many others. You can give a lot of examples from every domain. In business, you have a set of people, who are like Steve Jobs and others, who have, whom we can try to emulate, as far as their Virtues are concerned.

And in education, we have a lot of people. In politics, we have people like Kalam and others. So, we can emulate those people, who are not god like figures, who are not necessarily mahatmas. But, who are also people like us. But they have done great things. They have achieved great

things. And what would choose different stakeholders can cultivate to make the profession more fruitful to humanity. This is, where you know, you have to, when you talk about the application of Virtue Ethics in today's world. We have to actually think of going beyond the domain of the practice of. We have to actually, try to see how this can be, how this will be relevant for others, other stakeholders, not just Physicians. But other stakeholders in the context of health care practice like other health workers, hospital administrators, even patients and other people


How to see disease as a process, which you have to participate and try to avoid it or try to overcome it. How to lead a good life. All kinds of things will help you to understand, this is in a better way, in a better light and also make use of other profession more fruitfully to the betterment of humanity.

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Advantages and Disadvantages to Bioethics

- Views morality not as a matter of isolated choices made by people in different contexts.
- Moral life is a whole.
- The whole being of a person – life as a whole.
- More comprehensive view which takes into account all factors; individual, social, political, economic etc.
- Can be too idealistic: can everyone be a moral ideal?
- Several factors may influence formation of character like upbringing, circumstances etc.
- Does not accommodate different conceptions of good.
- Fails to solve specific and concrete dilemmas we face in life.



But at the same time, we should also try to see the limitations. I have already talked to you about the advantages of Virtue Ethics to Bioethics. Which, I repeat. Use morality not as a matter of isolated choices made by people in different context. So, there is always a reference to a moral life has a whole. It is not just an action, which you perform here or there. But your entire being comes into picture.

And the whole being of a person comes in to picture here. And more comprehensive view, which takes into account all factors like individual, social, political, economic, etc. So, Virtue Ethics

would definitely help us to arrive at such comprehensive frameworks. But at the same time, one can also point out some of the limitations of this Virtue Ethics framework. We should also appreciate. We should also understand that, there are certain limitations like it can be too idealistic.

One can always ask a question, can everyone be a moral ideal like Mahatma Gandhi. So, it is not actually possible to expect everybody to lead the life of a mahatma or to lead the life of an ideal human being. So, then again several factors may influence formation of Character like upbringing, circumstances etc. Like our childhood upbringing plays a very important role in forming our Character. So, it is not that all virtuous Characters can be later on cultivated by an individual. A huge quantity of our Character Traits are already been formed. There is an argument like that. So, how can you account for that. It does not accommodate different conceptions of good. That is another problem. Because today, we are living in a world, where we do not subscribe to one account of, what is Virtue, what is good and all.

There are different accounts of being virtuous and being good. So, which concept of goodness or which concept of Virtue, do you subscribe to. Often, what happens is that, one concept would necessarily treat the other as wrong and try to dominate that, try to correct that. And in that process, can be even tyrannical. So, in what sense, we can come up with concept of good or right, which would probably accommodate all different conceptions, which is a very practically difficult thing to attain, to achieve. And it fails to solve specific and concrete dilemmas, we face in our life.

These are some of the disadvantages of a Virtue Ethics framework. And of course, in when you discuss other frameworks, other more important frameworks in the coming lectures like Deontologyism and Utilitarianism, we can see that you know, it is not that one of the framework is going to be dominating in our discussions. Rather, we would be taking insights from all the frameworks. If Virtue Ethics is highlighting the importance of Character, we are not saying that Character alone is important in Ethics. But importance of Character cannot be neglected. When it comes to a discussion on Ethics, Character is really important.

But, in what way you attribute, we, you consider its important is a real question. So, right now, we will wind up this lecture here. We will move on and the next lecture will also discuss certain important Ethical frameworks in this context. And presently, we will wind up. Thank you. Ok
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